

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) An equalization system comprising:
 - a first equalizer to process a communication signal received from a communication channel to generate an output;
 - a reduced alphabet determination unit to identify a reduced alphabet based on said output of said first equalizer; ~~and~~
 - a reduced alphabet MLSE equalizer to detect data in said communication signal received from said communication channel based on said reduced alphabet identified by said reduced alphabet determination unit;
 - the first equalizer generates the output having a subset of symbols with a greater probability of being an actually transmitted as determined from the communication signal; and
 - the alphabet determination unit generates the reduced alphabet further based on the subset of the symbols provided by the first equalizer.
2. (Original) The equalization system of claim 1, wherein:
 - said first equalizer has a length that is less than an anticipated memory length of said communication channel.
3. (Original) The equalization system of claim 1, wherein:
 - said first equalizer includes a reduced length MLSE equalizer.
4. (Original) The equalization system of claim 1, wherein:
 - said first equalizer includes a delayed decision feedback sequence estimation (DDFSE) equalizer.

5. (Original) The equalization system of claim 1, wherein:
said first equalizer includes a linear equalizer.
6. (Original) The equalization system of claim 1, wherein:
said first equalizer includes an M-Algorithm equalizer.
7. (Original) The equalization system of claim 1, wherein:
said first equalizer includes an SA(B,C) detector.
8. (Original) The equalization system of claim 1, wherein:
said reduced alphabet MLSE equalizer is a full-state MLSE equalizer.
9. (Original) The equalization system of claim 1, wherein:
said output of said first equalizer includes a plurality of soft symbols each having a corresponding probability, wherein said reduced alphabet determination unit selects the K highest probability soft symbols from said output as said reduced alphabet, where K is a positive integer.
10. (Original) The equalization system of claim 1, wherein:
said output of said first equalizer includes a single symbol, wherein said reduced alphabet determination unit selects K-1 symbols from a full alphabet that are closest in distance to said single symbol as said reduced alphabet, where K is a positive integer greater than 1.
11. (Original) The equalization system of claim 1, wherein:
said reduced alphabet determination unit identifies a reduced alphabet having K symbols, where K is a positive integer, said equalization system further comprising an alphabet length determination unit for determining a value

for K based on an output of said first equalizer.

12. (Original) The equalization system of claim 11, wherein:
said alphabet length determination unit determines a value for K on an input symbol by input symbol basis.

13. (Original) The equalization system of claim 11, wherein:
said alphabet length determination unit determines a value for K based on a probability associated with a highest probability soft symbol output by said first equalizer for a particular input symbol.

14. (Original) The equalization system of claim 11, wherein:
said alphabet length determination unit determines a value for K so that a cumulative probability of the K highest probability soft symbols output by said first equalizer exceeds a threshold value.

15. (Currently Amended) A method for performing equalization within a communication system, comprising:

first processing a communication signal using a first equalizer;
determining a reduced alphabet based on a result of said first processing;

and

second processing said communication signal using a reduced alphabet MLSE equalizer, said reduced alphabet MLSE equalizer operating on said communication signal based on said reduced alphabet;

the first processing including processing the communication signal by the first equalizer to produce a subset of symbols with a greater probability of being an actually transmitted; and

the determining including producing the reduced alphabet based on the subset of the symbols provided by the first equalizer.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein:
said first equalizer includes a reduced state MLSE equalizer.
17. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein:
first processing includes generating a plurality of soft symbols having associated probabilities.
18. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein:
determining a reduced alphabet includes selecting the K highest probability soft symbols from said plurality of soft symbols as the reduced alphabet, where K is a positive integer.
19. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein:
first processing includes generating a hard symbol and determining includes selecting the K-1 symbols within a full alphabet that are closest in distance to said hard symbol, where K is a positive integer greater than 1.
20. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein:
determining a reduced alphabet includes determining an alphabet of size K, where K is a positive integer, said method further comprising redetermining K for successive input symbols within said communication signal.
21. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein:
second processing includes processing said communication signal in a full-state, reduced alphabet MLSE equalizer.
22. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium having program instructions stored thereon for implementing, when executed within a digital

processing device, a method for performing equalization within a communication system, said method comprising:

first processing a communication signal using a first equalizer;
determining a reduced alphabet based on a result of said first processing;
and

second processing said communication signal using a reduced alphabet MLSE equalizer, said reduced alphabet MLSE equalizer operating on said communication signal based on said reduced alphabet;

the first processing including processing the communication signal by the first equalizer to produce a subset of symbols with a greater probability of being an actually transmitted; and

the determining including producing the reduced alphabet based on the subset of the symbols provided by the first equalizer.

23. (Original) The computer readable medium of claim 22, wherein:

determining a reduced alphabet includes determining a reduced alphabet for each input symbol within said communication signal.

24. (Original) The computer readable medium of claim 22, wherein:

determining a reduced alphabet includes determining a reduced alphabet having a size that is related to a symbol probability determined during first processing.

25. (Original) An equalization system comprising:

a reduced state, full-alphabet MLSE equalizer to process a communication signal received from a communication channel to generate a plurality of soft symbols for a first input symbol within said communication signal, said plurality of soft symbols having corresponding symbol probabilities;

a symbol selection unit to select symbols from said plurality of soft

symbols to form a reduced alphabet for said first input symbol; and
a full-state, reduced alphabet MLSE equalizer to process said communication signal based on said reduced alphabet.

26. (Original) The equalization system claimed in claim 25, wherein:
said symbol selection unit selects, for said first input symbol, the K highest probability soft symbols output by said reduced state, full-alphabet MLSE equalizer to form said reduced alphabet, where K is an integer greater than 1.

27. (Original) The equalization system claimed in claim 26, comprising:
an alphabet size determination unit to determine a value for K for each input symbol within said communication signal based on symbol probabilities output by said reduced state, full-alphabet MLSE equalizer.

28. (Original) A communication device, comprising:
means for receiving a communication signal from a communication channel, said communication signal including undetected input symbols selected from a full symbol alphabet;
means for determining, for individual input symbols within said communication signal, a reduced symbol alphabet having symbols that are more likely to be an actual transmitted symbol than other symbols within said full symbol alphabet; and
a full-state MLSE equalizer for processing said communication signal based on said reduced symbol alphabet.

29. (Original) The communication device of claim 28, wherein:
said means for determining includes means for dynamically adjusting a

size of said reduced symbol alphabet for successive input symbols within said communication signal.

30. (Original) The communication device of claim 28, wherein:
said means for determining includes a reduced complexity equalizer.

Claims 31-33. (Canceled)